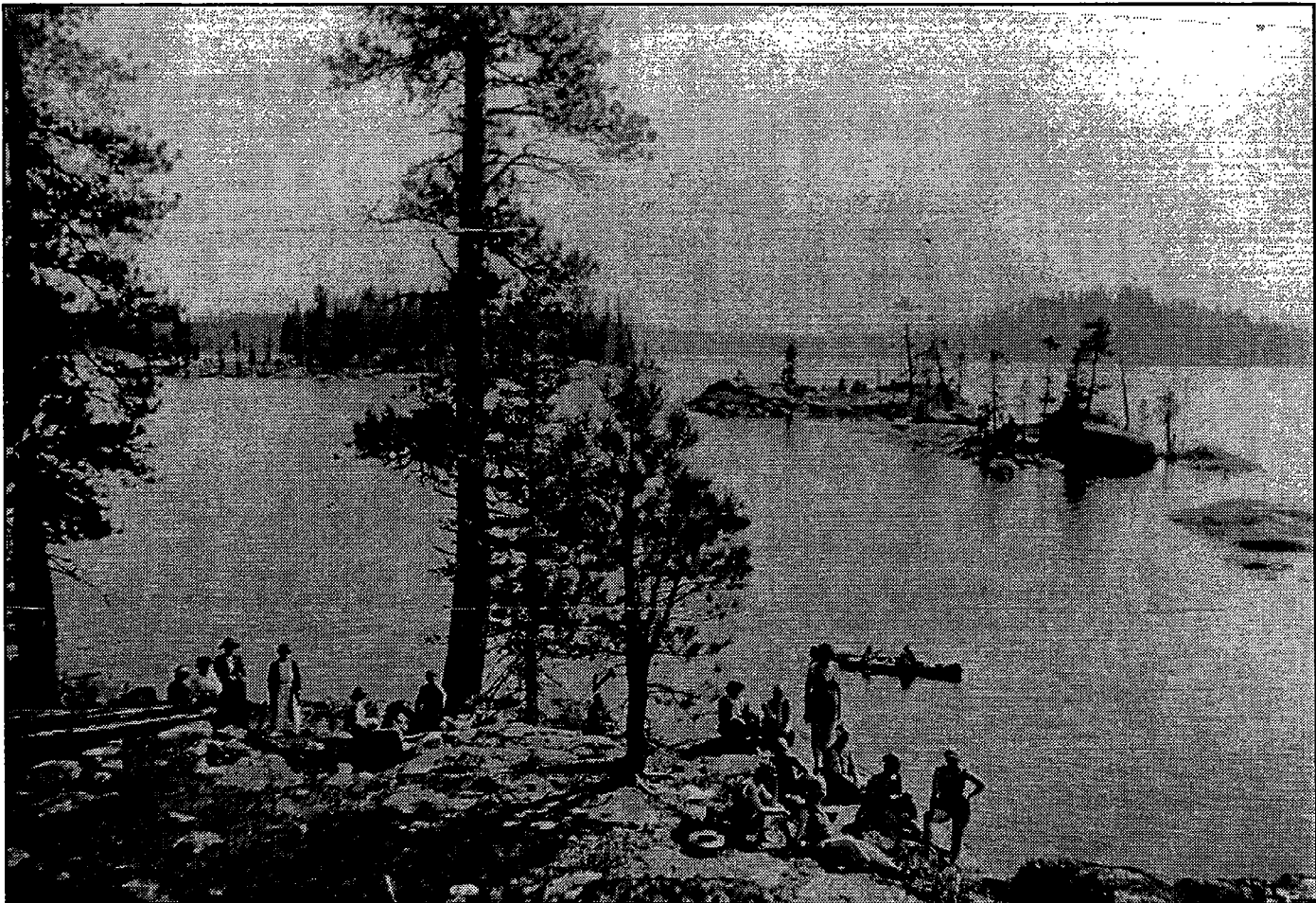




CHAPTER 2

Local Context

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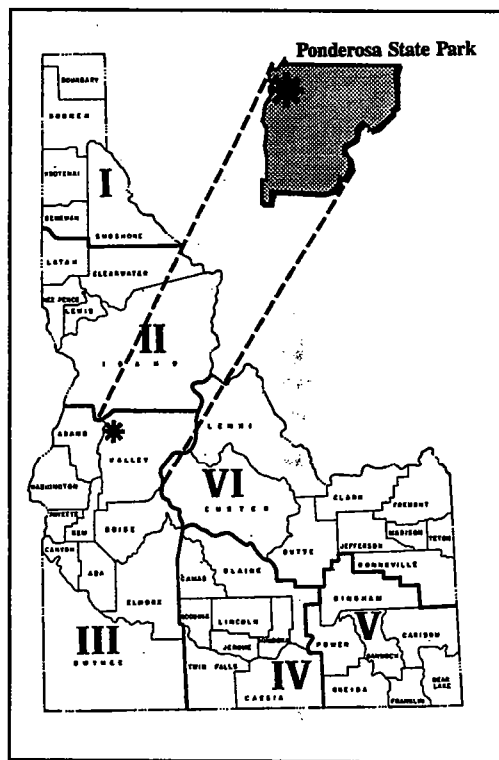


Swimming at Payette Lake (Paradise Point?). Photo courtesy of Idaho Historical Society

LOCATION AND REGIONAL HISTORY

Location

Ponderosa State Park is located in Valley County, two miles northeast of McCall, on the shores of Payette Lake. The park's North Beach Unit sits squarely astride the 45th parallel, the line of latitude midway between the Equator and the North Pole. For regional planning purposes, Valley County and nine adjacent counties have been grouped together and designated as Region Three of the state's six planning regions, shown on map 2.1.



Map 2.1 Valley County vicinity map

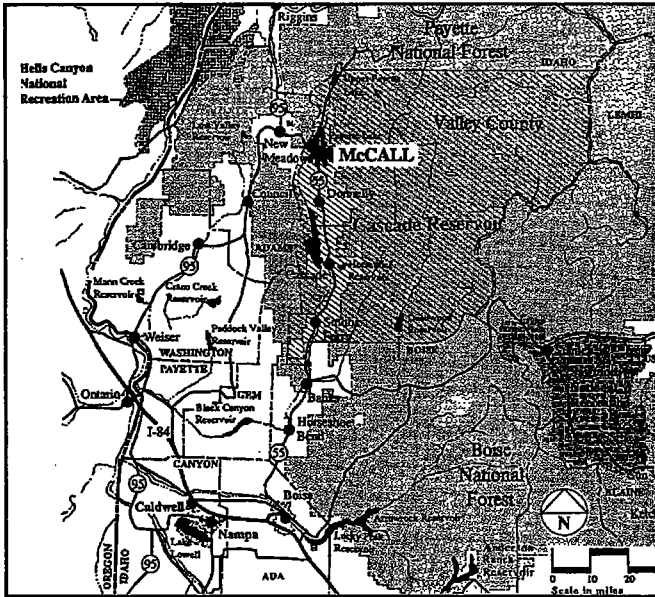
History

The early history of Valley County centers around Long and Round valleys and begins with the 1860s gold rush. Packer John Welch, a contractor who hauled supplies from Umatilla Landing on the Columbia River to miners in Idaho City, blazed a trail through the wilderness, and entered Long Valley at Payette Lake. He established a way station near what later became the town of Cascade. During the 1870s prospectors and miners followed in his footsteps.

During this period there was considerable Indian activity; Long and Round valleys were popular hunting and council grounds, and Indians frequented the area to hunt and to dry camas roots. Many traces of Indian campgrounds can still be found today; but none are known to exist in the vicinity of the park. In 1879, during their flight across Long Valley, Sheepeater Indians ambushed and murdered four white men. Their eventual defeat and transfer to a reservation marked the end of Native American life in Valley County.

As gold sources dwindled, a few miners began to take up squatters' rights. During the 1880s over 30 families moved to the valley and in 1888, the first post office in Valley County opened at Alpha. By 1890, as many as 750 people may have been living in Valley County.

During the 1890s a Finnish community began to build east of Lake Fork, and by the 1930s the community had grown to 400.



Map 2.2
McCall vicinity map

In 1896 the Warren Dredge Co., opened a sawmill on Payette Lake, and in 1893 gold was discovered at Thunder Mountain, although large-scale mining didn't begin until 1902. As 3,000 miners swarmed into the region, the town of Roosevelt sprang up. It was destroyed by a landslide in 1908. A lake formed behind the slide and eventually flooded the town.

The most important event in the counties' history was the coming of the railroad in 1914. The Union Pacific pushed its tracks from Emmett to McCall. This made commercial logging in the area profitable. Towns far from the rails withered and died; towns on the rails-- Donnelly and McCall--thrived and became the population centers of Valley County. Logging, farming, and ranching remained the economic mainstays of the area for many years.

History of McCall

Long Valley pioneer Tom McCall and his family arrived at the southern shore of Payette Lake and acquired "squatters' rights" to the first cabin site in 1891. The town's roots are in timber, mining, and cattle ranching. Lumber was produced in mills on Payette Lake for 80 years until Boise Cascade closed the last one in 1977. The arrival of Idaho Northern Pacific Railroad in June, 1914 and the construction of State Highway 55 opened up the region to recreating masses. In the 1920s the state Land Board began leasing vacation homesites along the lake. Currently, there are 241 cottage-site lease lots, primarily located at the southern end of the lake.

Francois Payette

Payette Lake was named in honor of Francois Payette, the man after whom the city and county of Payette, the Payette River system, Payette National Forest, and Upper and Little Payette lakes are named.

Francois Payette was a French-Canadian mountain man who first arrived in the Oregon Territory in 1812. Although admired for his remarkable hunting and trapping skills, Payette became renowned for his service as manager of Fort Boise, from 1835 to 1844.

THE MAGIC OF McCALL

Introduction

The quaint alpine community of

McCall is located a scenic two-hour, 108-mile drive north of Boise, Idaho's capital city and is in an area referred to as "Idaho's Heartland."

McCall is renowned for its picturesque setting on 5,337-acre, crystal-clear Payette Lake. Nestled in a high-mountain valley, its 5,027-foot average elevation receives a mean annual snowfall of 151 inches, the most of any town in the state. Downhill ski runs at Brundage Mountain and Little Ski Hill, and miles of groomed cross-country trails at Ponderosa State Park attract skiers from all over the Northwest.

Campgrounds, swimming beaches, hot springs, and trails also beckon area recreationists. Power boating, water skiing, snowmobiling, sailing, canoeing, kayaking, and white-water rafting opportunities abound.

The endless variety of recreational activities, along with many overnight accommodations and growing number of tourist facilities have transformed McCall into one of Idaho's premiere, four-season destination resorts.

A TIME OF TRANSITION

Tourism explosion

The area's once-fledgling tourism trade has mushroomed into its second largest industry. McCall's population of 2,005 (1990 census) full-time winter residents balloons dramatically with the influx of 8,000 to 12,000 summer home owners and vacationers. At one time considered an unknown "Lake Tahoe," McCall has now been discov-

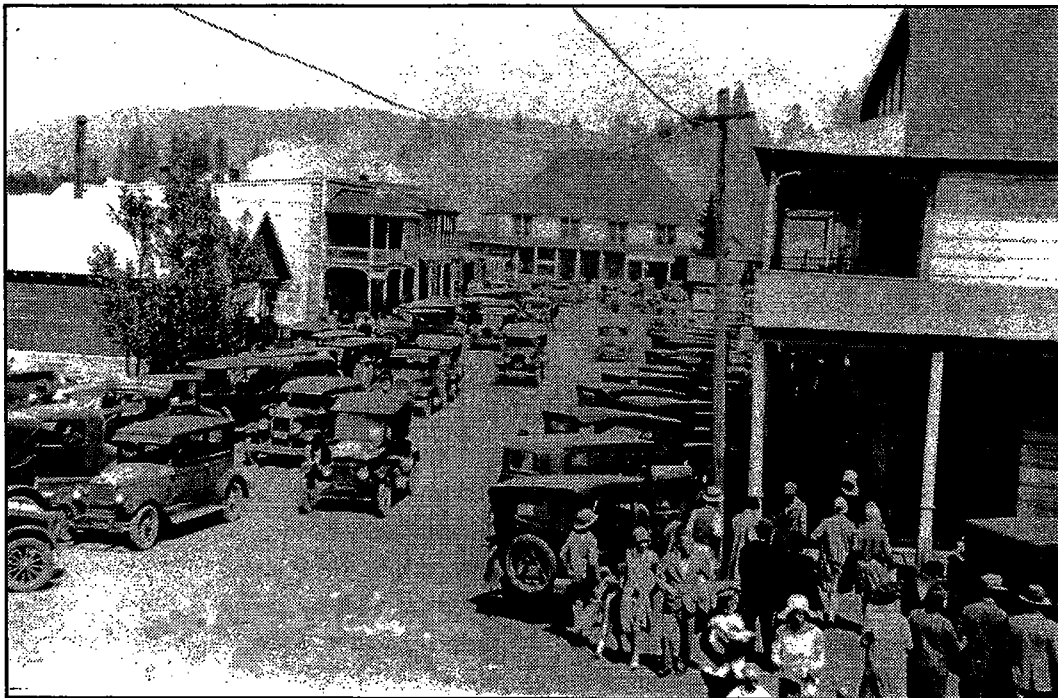


Photo 2.1 Lake Street in downtown McCall, circa 1920. Photo Courtesy Idaho State Historical Society.

ered and the value of lake-front property has soared to \$4,000 per foot of shoreline.

San Diego developer Douglas Manchester has renovated the Shore Lodge and has a major development planned for the old mill site. O'Neill Enterprises of Boise, developer of River Run in Boise and Lane Ranch in Sun Valley, has plans to construct a 400-acre, 750-home development-Spring Mountain Ranch subdivision a half-mile from the park boundary.

Woodlands Development Inc., has entered the development frenzy with its 120-acre, 243-home Woodlands subdivision project. Developments of this magnitude attest to the pressure being exerted on this once sleepy mountain Shangri-la.

CITY AND PARK - AN EVOLVING RELATIONSHIP

Background

Twenty-five years ago, Ponderosa State Park was located two miles outside of McCall in "the land that time forgot." There were few tourist facilities in town, and little development had occurred in the hinterlands that separated the two entities. Regional visitors to this destination campground stopped in McCall for supplies on the way to the park, and stopped again to gas up as they left for home. At that time, their recreating was done within the park's boundaries.

The times and people have changed. Suburban development has crept toward the park and is now at its

gates. A new breed of user, day-use visitors who are based in McCall, are clamoring to the park in ever-increasing numbers.

The average campground visitor leaves the park almost twice daily for supplies or to pursue other forms of recreation in McCall. Traffic corridors, pedestrian paths, and bicycle trails currently in the planning stages will weave the park even more tightly into the fabric of the community. Once-clear boundaries, market, and mission have become ambiguous as people entrusted with the park's management have struggled to understand and adapt to its newly emerging role. Ponderosa State Park will no longer serve primarily as a regional destination campground. In the future, its focus will inevitably shift toward that of an integral, day-use provider to a burgeoning, year-round resort community.

PAYETTE LAKE

Early Recognition

The scenic and recreational opportunities afforded by Payette Lake were highly rated even before there was a road to McCall. Soldiers involved in the Bannock and Sheepeater Indian wars of 1878 and 1879 camped along Payette Lake and brought back reports of beautiful scenery, blue water, and fabulous fishing. By 1889, the recreational values of the lake were fully recognized and shrewd businessmen were beginning to cater to the fledgling tourist trade. In 1892 Boiseans were regularly venturing to Payette

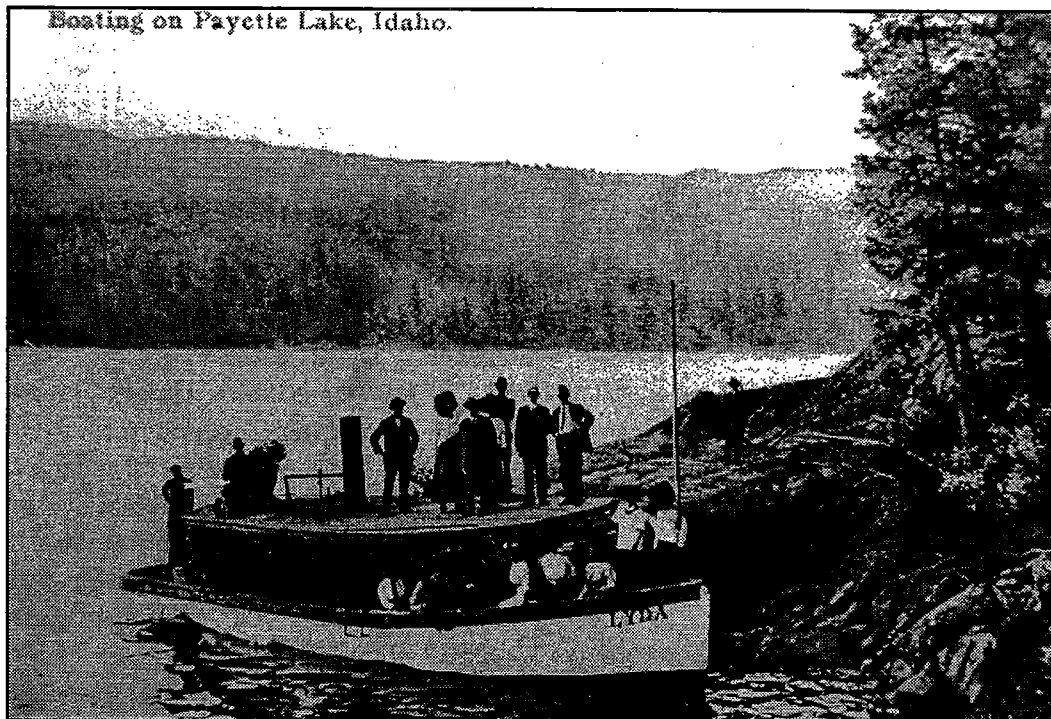


Photo 2.2 Steamboat Lyda tugged many a "dancing barge" around Payette Lake in the early 1900s. Photo Courtesy Idaho State Historical Society.

Lake for summer vacations. An early entrepreneur of the tourism trade was Anneas Wyatt.

Wyatt constructed a hotel and operated the resort and a 30-foot sailing yacht "for the use of parties who may visit the lake on a pleasure bent." Wyatt also built and operated the steamboat *Lyda* to take up to 125 passengers on lake cruises. On calm summer evenings the *Lyda* would tow the "dancing barge" while patrons danced on its deck.

Glacial Origin

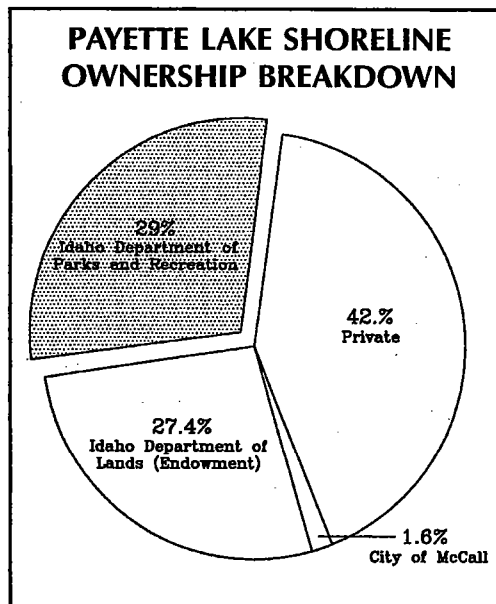
The valley of the North Fork of the Payette River above Payette Lake was formed by a large glacier about 15,000 years ago during a period of long, wet, cold winters and short, cool

summers. As these cold conditions persisted, the glacier grew and crept slowly down the valley, gouging and scouring the granitic and basaltic rock formations, gradually creating the U-shaped topography typical of glaciated valleys. Geologists have estimated that at one time, the glacier was 900 feet thick, and averaged 2.5 miles wide and eight miles long.

As climatic conditions moderated, the glacier began its retreat up the valley. As the ice melted, rock and sediment were deposited and formed a terminal moraine--the farthest downstream point which the ice field reached--and the material on which the town of McCall is built.

Meltwater filled the glacially gouged basin to 40 feet above the lake's

Figure 2.1 Shoreline ownership chart.



current elevation. At this level "The Point," located at the north end of the peninsula, would have been an island. The continued erosion of the outlet stream through the glacial deposits lowered the lake level to its current elevation.

Shoreline Ownership

There are 21.64 miles of shoreline around Payette Lake. Of this, 9.09 miles (42 percent) are estimated to be in private ownership; 6.29 miles (29 percent) are owned by IDPR; 5.92 miles (27.4 percent) are endowment lands managed by the Idaho Department of Lands; and .34 miles (1.6 percent) are owned by the city of McCall. Only .8 miles (3.7 percent) of this shoreline are public swimming beaches.

Payette Lake Outlet Structure

Further lowering of the lake by this natural process was halted in 1944

when the Payette Water Users Association reconstructed the dam just below the Lardo bridge on Idaho 55. This dam maintains a summer surface elevation of 4,989 feet above mean sea level, until water is needed for irrigation in the Emmett area, usually during August and September.

Lake Characteristics

Payette Lake is approximately 5,337 surface acres, has a storage capacity of 41,000 acre feet, and is ringed by nearly 22 miles of shoreline. Generally oriented along a north-south axis, the lake is approximately 6.3 miles long and 1.8 miles across at its widest point.

The predominate topographic feature in the area is the basaltic peninsula which juts northward into the lake, naturally dividing it into two large water bodies, known as the west basin and the east basin. These two basins are joined at the Narrows, which is located just off the western tip of the peninsula.

Sonograms of the lake have determined that its deepest point, 304 feet, is located in the east basin northeast of the peninsula's tip. Each year the surface of Payette Lake freezes in December, and usually thaws in April.

The Islands

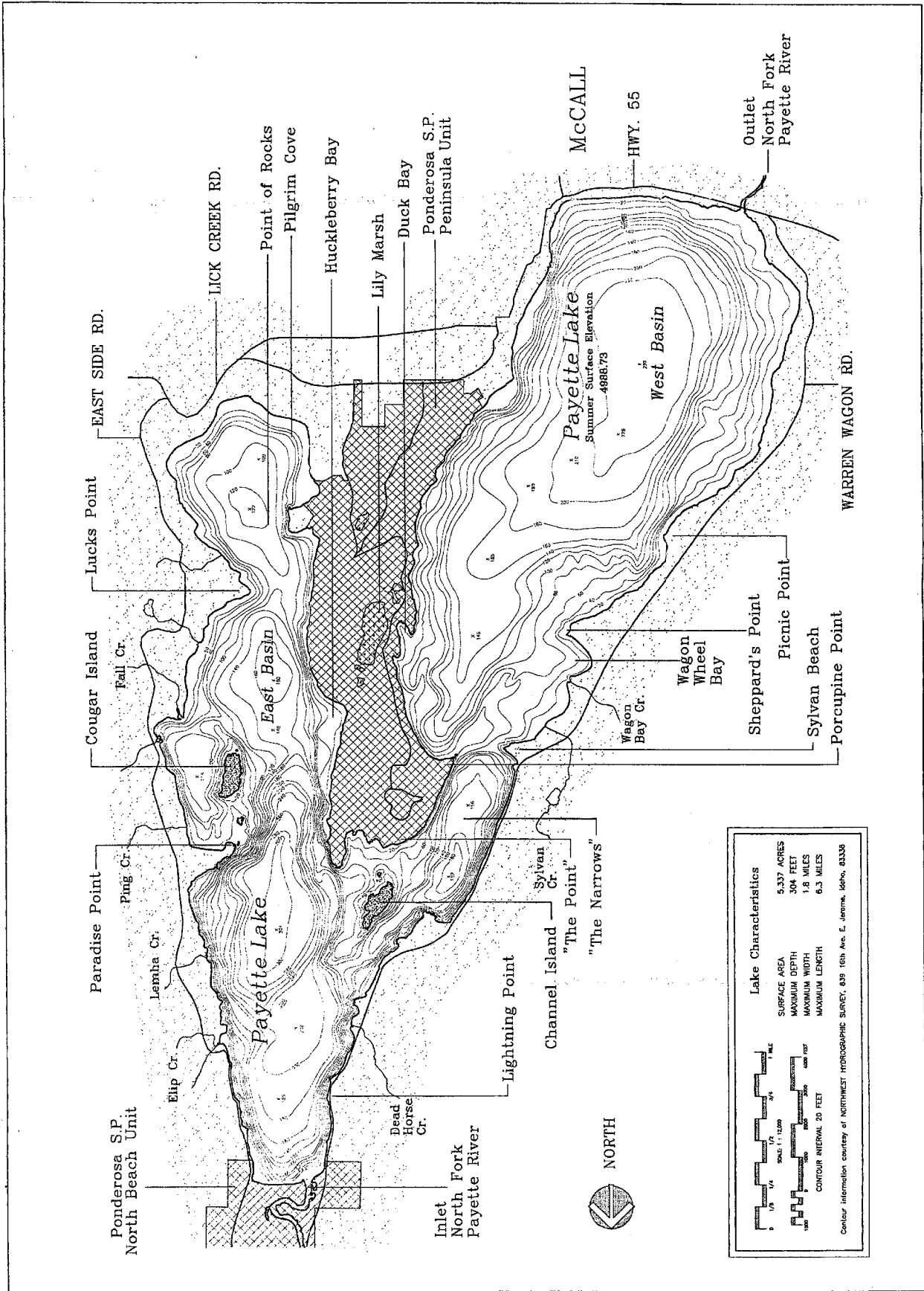
Two islands are located in Payette Lake, Channel Island and Cougar Island. Each is approximately 13 acres. Both are endowment lands owned and managed by the Idaho Department of Lands. Channel Island is

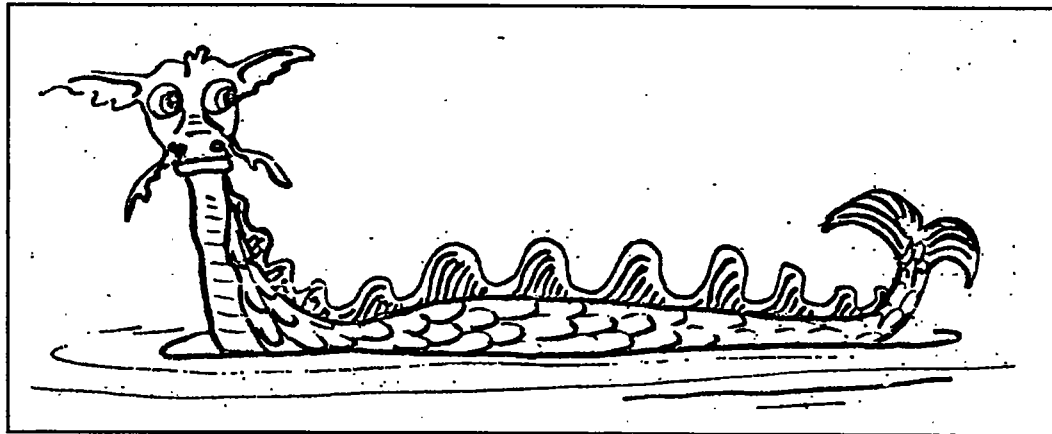


PAYETTE LAKE HYDROGRAPHIC INVENTORY



Map 2.3





Artist's conception of Payette Lake's famous, or infamous, and elusive sea serpent, Sharlie.

located just north of the Narrows; Cougar Island is located in the east basin, just south of Paradise Point.

PAYETTE LAKE'S WATER QUALITY

Introduction

The waters of Payette Lake were thoroughly studied in 1982 prior to sewer-line installation by the Payette Lake Water and Sewer District. This study showed high water quality with low levels of nutrient loading. It also indicated the lake was sensitive to relatively small amounts of additional nutrients, particularly phosphorus.

The source of water for Payette Lake is a drainage basin covering approximately 144 square miles, or 92,160 acres (Map 3.15). All activity conducted within this watershed, particularly adjacent to the lake and its tributaries, affects the quality of its waters. This is an issue of vital concern and cannot be over emphasized. Water quality is important for the recreationist, vital to the fishery indus-

SHARLIE

Any investigation of Payette Lake would be incomplete without mention of Sharlie, its mythical monster.

Native Americans had been avoiding the area for generations because many believed that an evil spirit inhabited the lake. The earliest reported sighting by a white person occurred about 1920, and in the 1930s, Civilian Conservation Corps personnel stationed in McCall also reported an encounter.

The serpent's reputation became nationwide in 1944 when a tongue-in-cheek article appeared in *Time Magazine*. *Time* referred to Payette Lake's mysterious inhabitant as "Slimy Slim." It wasn't until a 1950's naming contest sponsored by the *Payette Lake Star* that the shy sea serpent acquired the name Sharlie.

Most accounts describe Sharlie as being 30 to 60 feet long and having smooth, thick, rubbery skin. Its head has been described as periscope-like, resembling that of a snub-nose crocodile. Its also been said that the creature has three or four humps and a flat, forked tail. The monster's color has been described variously as black, brown, dark green, yellowish-green and iridescent.

Reports of frothing, churning or boiling water, rolling or undulating motions and ripples, wakes or whirlpools accompany many accounts. The creature has been sighted at various spots in the lake but is seen most frequently in the Narrows, the shallow channel connecting the eastern and western arms of the lake.

Skeptics discount the sightings as overactive imaginations triggered by lake dwellers like muskrats, geese and beaver. One theory suggests that Sharlie is a landlocked sturgeon, trapped in Payette Lake when it was dammed. Common in northwestern waters, sturgeon have a long life span and can reach the incredible size of almost 2,000 pounds.

try, and critical to the welfare of the city of McCall which relies upon the water of Payette Lake for its drinking-water supply.

Big Payette Lake Water Quality Act

In 1992, a group of citizens became concerned about the water quality of the Big Payette lake and its watershed because of increased private, public, and commercial pressures. Since then, much has happened that will lead to the protection and preservation of the quality of water in this important basin.

A citizen survey indicated that it is better to protect a healthy lake's water quality through a strategy of prevention rather than one of restoration after the lake becomes polluted. It became apparent that better water quality management decisions can only be made based upon an improved understanding of the lake and its watershed. That understanding would come from a scientifically based study, which would also increase public awareness, participation and corporate efforts.

Encouraged by growing interest in the idea, representatives Gayle Wilde, McCall, Judith Danielson, Council, and Sen. Terry Haun, Emmett, sponsored a bill before the Idaho Legislature.

Following several committee hearings, the Idaho Legislature adopted the Big Payette Lake Water Quality Act (BPLWQA), which provides for a program to conduct the study and develop a Water Quality Management Plan.

That plan is estimated to take

about three years to develop, and will be submitted to the Legislature for action.

The Act's legislative intent begins: *"The Legislature finds that the waters of Big Payette Lake and its watershed, are threatened with deterioration due to the expanding residential development, growing public use and growing land use activities, that these pressures may endanger the drinkability, economic potential, fisheries, natural beauty, recreational use, swimability and wildlife values of the lake; . . ."*

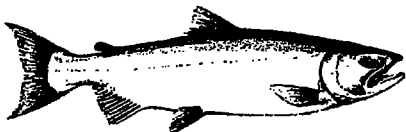
Governor-- Cecil Andrus signed the bill into law and named a nine-member Big Payette Lake Water Quality Council in May, 1993.

The council has no regulatory or enforcement powers. Its charge is to implement the program in the Act including the scientific study and the development of a Water Quality Management Plan to be submitted to the Legislature for approval. Thereafter, the council, technical committee and citizen's committee will work to implement the plan's guidelines, policies, and regulations for two years. At the end of this two-year period the council and all committees will disband.

HISTORY OF THE FISHERY

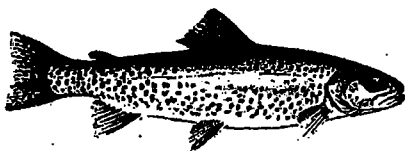
Salmon and trout

Payette Lake once supported large populations of sockeye salmon. The tributaries supported chinook salmon and steelhead trout runs. Around 1908 the runs were blocked by an irrigation diversion dam on the



Kokanee (Sockeye) Salmon

Kokanee are a schooling species occupying the cool, clear waters of lakes and reservoirs. They are generally found at depths which offer 50° - 59° F water temperatures with abundant oxygen and food. The kokanee's diet consists primarily of zooplankton with some small aquatic insects. In Idaho, most kokanee spawn August through September when tributary water temperatures reach 45° - 55° F. The bodies of adult fish turn dusky to bright red and their heads become dark green. A nest (redd) is constructed on gravel bars of lake tributaries and sometimes along lake shorelines. Adult kokanee die after spawning.



Rainbow Trout

Rainbow trout prefer water temperatures of 58° - 65° F and clear to slightly turbid water. They can be found in near-shore and open-water habitats with larger fish staying somewhat deeper. Rainbow feed primarily on aquatic insects, other fish and zooplankton depending upon availability. They are naturally spring spawners but have been bred by hatcheries to spawn nearly every month of the year. Spawning generally occurs when water temperatures reach 50° - 60° F, on gravel bars of lake tributaries and occasionally along lake shorelines in 2-10 feet of water.



Lake Trout (Mackinaw)

Lake trout inhabit only large, deep lakes and reservoirs where abundant forage fish exist. They generally prefer water between 60 and 175 feet deep where temperatures are 40° - 50° F. Lake trout feed primarily on other fish such as Kokanee, whitefish, cisco and yellow perch depending on availability. Spawning generally occurs during October and November in water generally less than 40 feet deep and between 48° - 55° F. Lake trout spawn from evening until well after dark over rocky bottom structure.

in the North Fork above Payette Lake as a winter staple, trapping a portion of the run in the fall and preserving them in salt brine.

Early-spawning kokanee have been released by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game as fingerlings since 1988. They are stocked in mid-May to coincide with the zooplankton bloom. Wild and natural kokanee currently appear to be the supporting fishery in Payette Lake. Habitat improvement in the gravel of the North Fork of the Payette River above Payette Lake is being conducted to stimulate expansion of the population.

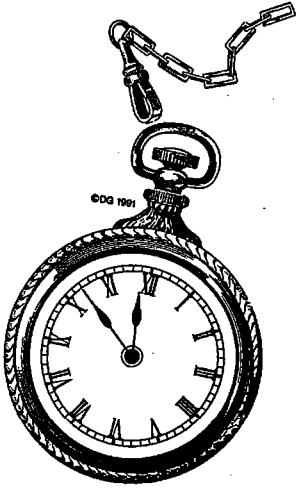
Mackinaw, or lake trout, were introduced into Payette Lake in 1955. The eggs are obtained in Canada, reared to nearly eight inches in a hatchery, and planted in the lake every year when eggs are available. Payette Lake is ideal spawning habitat for lake trout as they have thrived in the system for many years, and natural reproduction of the species is probably a foregone conclusion.

Poor return rates on catchable rainbow trout have resulted in a decreased planting, from an annual rate of 15,000 down to 5,000.

Westside cutthroat trout have been released in Payette Lake since 1988 in an attempt to develop a viable shoreline fishery. Approximately 30,000 to 50,000 cutthroat are scatter-planted annually along the shoreline and in major tributaries. Fish are obtained from eggs collected at the Fish Lake spawning facility west of McCall.

Payette River near Montour. Longtime residents of the area say that local people used the large whitefish runs

PONDEROSA STATE PARK CHRONOLOGY



January 12, 1905. *Long Valley Advocate* Publisher John R. Wallis wrote an editorial that said the land around Payette Lake should be a state park.

February 2, 1905. *Idaho Statesman* newspaper ran an editorial supporting a state park around Payette Lake.

March 9, 1905. *Long Valley Advocate* Publisher John R. Wallis, wrote an editorial explaining that a state park could not be created around Payette Lake because it is school endowment lands. Idaho would have to purchase the land from the schools.

September 27, 1906. State Legislature passed a resolution to make the land around Payette Lake a state park.

Summer 1918. The Columbian Club of Boise pushed a resolution through the Legislature forbidding any timber harvesting along Payette Lake. This resolution helped preserve the old-growth ponderosa pine on the peninsula.

December 1919. *Report of State Lands Around Payette Lake* by F.G. Miller recommended no timber sales except for insect-damaged or diseased trees. The reason he recommended this action was due to the importance of camping and the difficulty of logging operations that would not mar the view from the lake. This report prevented extensive logging on the peninsula.

1920s. A horse racing track and

a baseball diamond were developed in the sagebrush flat on the southern end of the peninsula.

1933. The U.S. Forest Service (via the Civilian Conservation Corps) built a road to the tip of the peninsula. Some logging was conducted on the peninsula.

1940. University of Idaho established its Forestry Summer Camp on leased Department of Lands property for its College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences (McCall Field Campus).

March 1941. Master Plan and Development Outline for Payette Lake State Park prepared by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. (See Appendix C)

July 19, 1952. Father Peplinski of Boise looked at site for Youth Camp (Pilgrim Cove Nazarene).

1953. State of Idaho Land Department creates a parks section. The peninsula is included as parks land.

August 1, 1954. State Lands commissioner discontinued position of caretaker at Ponderosa State Park (Formerly held by Chelsea Rockwood).

1957. Ponderosa State Park designated to include all lands in Valley County adjacent to Payette Lake.

1958. Department of Lands completes *Payette Lake Recreational Plan*. The Idaho National Guard, 116th Engineers, completed two-week encampment at Ponderosa and constructed 2-1/2 miles of road on the peninsula.

1960. State of Idaho Land Department hired its first parks director, J.W. Emmert. The first facilities were developed at Ponderosa State Park.

1965. Administration of Ponderosa State Park transferred from Department of Lands to newly created Idaho State Parks Department.

June 1966. Herman Koppes appointed park manager.

1967-1969. The development of most of the present park facilities occurred during this period. The sewer system, water system, three camping loops, deep-draft boat ramp, and rerouting of the entrance road was completed.

October 1969. Gene Eyraud appointed park manager. The manager's residence is built and the park is staffed year-round.

1970. Snowmobile program instituted in winter.

March 15, 1973. Park Board purchases North Beach Unit (489.90 acres) and the 827.77 acres of the Peninsula Unit from the Idaho Department of Lands for \$1,194,179.02 and \$2,017,770.08, respectively.

April 1976. Rick Cummins appointed park manager.

March 1977. Cross-country ski grooming program begins.

1980. Snowmobile use prohibited in the park.

December 2, 1982. The Park Board officially designates 305 acres within the park as a "natural area" to provide protection for specific unique natural features.

1982. Motorized vehicle entrance fee initiated at the park.

December 17, 1984. Application submitted to nominate Lily Marsh as a National Natural Landmark.

1984. Ponderosa Natural History

Association created.

December 1986. Ned Jackson appointed park manager.

December 1989. Dennis Coyle appointed park manager.

November 19, 1991. Department of Lands conveys 58.53 acres (land formerly leased to the Silver Sage Girl Scout Council) to IDPR for inclusion into the park.

February 24, 1992. Organizational meeting, Ponderosa GDP Advisory Committee.

March 30, 1992. Public Workshop on Ponderosa GDP McCall, Idaho.

August 4, 1993. Park and Recreation Board tentatively approves the preliminary general development plan at its meeting in Boise.

December 7, 1993. All-day public open house held in McCall at the Ponderosa State Park's visitor center to present preliminary draft and receive comments.

December 14, 1993. All-day public open house held at Boise headquarters to present preliminary draft to the public.

April 25, 1994. Concepts and proposals to be included in final draft presented at meeting with Valley County Commissioners and city of McCall planning agencies.

April 29, 1994. Final GDP concepts presented to IDPR Board at McCall board meeting, including comments made at joint agency meetings.

June 23 1994. Park and Recreation Board approves *Ponderosa General Development Plan* at regular meeting in Boise.